

Adding Value to Local Wool, Wood and Food



The innovator

Beth Rose

Region: Strathnairn (Highlands, Scotland)

Sector: Crofting (local food/wool/wood)



Features of my innovator journey

- Traditional croft based in the Highlands of Scotland which had not been used for many years
- We now have a mix of permanent grass fields, rough grazing, and trees
- Cattle, sheep, pigs, hens, bees, fruit and vegetables are all reared/grown on the croft. We produce feed for our own livestock during winter
- We seek to use natural resources whenever possible to protect the rural landscape and biodiversity
- We produce a range of seasonal food (meat, vegetables, preserves, honey, eggs) to sustain the family and surplus is sold locally, through direct selling and community markets
- Produce is marketed through the website and social media and sold directly to individuals and at community markets
- Community markets can be very time consuming and require a lot of effort, placing a lot of strain when balancing family life
- As it is entirely managed by us, and with a husband who works offshore and now two children, I have looked at changing aspirations

Innovation from 3 perspectives

Economic

Weaving is compatible with family life
Opportunity to earn money from fleeces
It gives wool credential by adding value
Increase in market sales of wool products
Own a floor loom



Environmental

Sheep help maintain the uplands by rough grazing
Sheep breeds that are most suitable for the area have coarse wool appropriate for carpets
Respects the natural ecosystem
Provides a natural end product



Social

There is demand for maintaining traditional skills
Hand weaving is uncommon in the immediate area
Collaborative work with other local flock holders for fleeces
Greater work/life balance
Can continue to be a part of the community



Barriers

Cultural - Traditional skills are often viewed as 'hobbies' by society. As a solo worker the children and livestock come first, thus it is hard to prioritise personal aspirations when not viewed as necessary (assembling loom, gaining skills, knowledge transfer)

Social - Rural communities rely heavily on volunteers, assisting with a lot of this is time consuming but much needed in rural areas to ensure a vibrant community

Economic - a workspace is needed with equipment to process wool and weave. Most grants do not cover micro-business ideas

“The Living Lab gives a reason to focus on a journey I never felt I could undertake and to really look at my aspirations. It allows networking with people I wouldn't have known otherwise and a real sense of encouragement and support. It gives greater visibility to traditional skills and looks at adding value to a natural product”. Beth Rose, farmer



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101083408



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